

JACK ANDERSON GOOD MORNING AMERICA SHOW 28 JANUARY 1981

Yesterday morning I gave you a secret assessment of Leonoid Brezhnev's health. According to the CIA, the Soviet leader has been slowed to a shuffle by old age and heart trouble. He endures intense facial pains. For relief, he takes too much medication which causes great changes in his moods. Well this raises an obvious question. Will Brezhnev's poor health finally drive him from power? The CIA reports growing restlessness over a leader who can work only three hours a day. Let me quote from a report stamped TOP SECRET. There has been some indication that the leadership is beginning to address the problem of succession; but, I'm still quoting, Brezhnev has so far made no move to establish a successor and most present candidates lack a good claim to his mantel. Sometimes he gets depressed and talks about retiring. His younger brother recently hinted that the old Kremlin czar might call it quits. But the CIA checked out the report and submitted this TOP SECRET evaluation. This may have accurately reflected Brezhnev's outlook during one of his down periods, but later clandestine reporting and Brezhnev's more recent public behavior suggests he means to stay on. Clearly, Brezhnev has periods of elation and depression; and his intentions may vary as his mood swings. Now here is the CIA's final judgment. There are able men already in the politburo, as well as others waiting on the threshold.

None of them has established a special claim to consideration as a contender for the position at the top. Now if the Soviets wish to achieve the first move succession in their history, serious collective planning will have to begin soon. There is no sign of such planning.